THE

AERONAUT.

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Stulta reprehendere facillimum est, nam per se sunt ridicula. QUINTIL.

It is very easy to ridicule folly, since it is of itself so ridiculous.

FOPPISHNESS may be said to have as great an influence over the display of mind as over manners & fashion. When it appears in the conduct of intellect, it is infinitely more contemptible, in our eyes, than in any other form whatsoever. It degrades from the dignity of man in a more important point of view;

it strips the soul of its lustre, and drapes up the mind in a flimsy and tawdry garb.

A literary fop excites our contempt in a higher degree, because, when a man professes to have knowledge, acuteness, and intellect, we are unspeakably disgusted to find that his ostentation by no means is on a level with his actual merits. Small in his understanding, he endeavors to pass himself off for a genius. Scantily informed, he would have mankind suppose, that he had fathomed all learning both ancient & modern. When surrounded by those more ignorant than himself, he fancies that he is the oracle of the assembly; the prattle that proceeds from his mouth is disgustingly mingled with pompous observations upon men, & books, which perhaps he never saw even the title pages. He studiously avoids the company of men better informed than himself,

because he feels conscious that his knowledge would soon be proved to extend no further than the columns of a newspaper, or the ephemeral productions of fancy. He associates with weak girls, or young men equally shallow with himself; is taken for a wit, and becomes inexpressibly impertinent. If you venture an opinion on any literary subject whatever, in the presence of one of these gentlemen, you are sure to be interrupted with some ridiculous remark, which betrays at once the impudence and the ignorance of its author. We ourselves have learned by experience to treat these animals with the contempt they deserve, and instead of suffering our minds or our tempers to be ruffled by their babble, to pass them by in perfect silence. The circle who listen to the sage remarks of this fop, are welcome to enjoy still their unenviable satisfaction; to reap the

golden harvest of instruction, and to gain all the wisdom which these sages can confer. Their absurdity can never throw a spot to tarnish the genuine glory of literature. The light that beams down from its sacred source obscures by its effulgence the vapors that would oppose it.

In looking over our papers, we find the following letter from a person, who seems to have suffered from the intolerable foppishness of some of his acquaintance. We would however recommend to him patience under his grievances, & advise him to give no heed to such pests of society. We fear he has magnified the evil to himself, & has not remembered, that there must necessarily be but a scanty portion of intellect, when men act in so ludicrous a manner. He has extended his remarks to both sexes.

To the AUTHORS of the AERONAUT.

Gentlemen.

I take this mode of unbur-
thening my griefs to you; as I know you
can sympathize with their recital from the
experience you must yourselves have had.
I am a young man who have gone through
the common course of education and have
made about as much progress in my studies
as our youth generally do, after they have
lounged through some dozen college lec-
tures. I entertain a high respect for the
ancients, and much reverence for the authors
of Great Britain. I do not glory either
in the little I know, or the greatness of my
ignorance; But, my patience is constantly
put to the test and my ears irritated,
by two classes of individuals who are
of exactly opposite to myself in their prac-

:tia. Of the latter class, those who make their boast of their entire freedom from the hammels of knowledge, I will not even speak. And of the others, I only mean to give vent to my disgust at the operations of their tongues, as they wag to the movements of vanity's fiddlestick.

I have almost forsworne the newspapers, on account of the lamentable harm which inundates their columns in this time of peace; however, when I get up in the morning, and set about shaving myself, I am sure to light on some piece of criticism among my tonsorial apparatus. Some wooden headed editor is pronouncing his dogmas as imperiously in the realms of the muses as he was wont to do in the political Market. "We think the finest poem which has been produced in

America &c." and then, from an [illegible] mensity of frustian, he selects the most tawdry part to shed his critical acumen. Or else, I meet with a twopenny string of doggrel, taken from some English paper, of which the editor remarks - "that he never read anything equal to such a verse" &c -

I now proceed quietly to my counting house; as I traverse the streets, the pendants of all the bookstores are displayed and some new English poem is announced. Not daring to buy it, from fear of taking an antipathy to it from the booksellers opinion, I go peaceably onward - Alas! "non licitum fatis!" Some of my friends meet me with "have you seen the new poem? I don't think it is as good as his last work; he has written enough &c"

At every corner, in every book store, at the coffeehouses, where no more literature is required than what will suffice to read the scratches on a bale of goods, I am sure to meet a nest of these critics. But it is in my evening tours among the fair sex, that I plunge into the Babel of criticism. There, both sides of my species conspire to talk as much nonsense apiece, as would serve a common labouring man for a twelvemonth, including courtships.

Seriana Stickleg is a maiden lady, who suffers it to be understood, that she has frequent visitations from the muse. She gets the Edinburgh review from England, and digests a little of the critiques on poems of the day, which she retails in the evening to her friends and acquaintances with the importance of originality.

Jemima is sure to ask them all afterward, whether they have read the number in question, and brings them to confess that her opinion coincides with that of the editor of the Journal.

Narcissus Daffydowndilly is a youth of a fair complexion, verging towards old barlike: corduf. He sings a good song, but is a practical argument against the connection between poetry and music. He may have the soul of music in him, as Pompey the little observed of the frying pan and candlesticks, but he has not the soul of poetry, any more than a mocking bird. He gets his tunes from foreigners; and, it is pleasant to see him turn up his nose and shew his crooked white teeth, when any unfortunate American prefers Madoc or Roderick to the metrical romances of the day. Narcissus was told that Lord Coke never sung as good a song as himself, and, as he is a

lawyer by trade, he was much pleased by the compliment.

It were endless to give you a description of all the characters in the circle of my acquaintance, equally ridiculous, but not strongly marked. I met all the shades of difference the other day, at a conversazione given by a long, spider limbed lady, who is a musician and a critic. She has naturally strong, substantial sense; but having also a strong box, and a substantial interest in the funds, her admirers have found out her weak side, and made her most nauseously vain. While she sees their insufficiency and ridicules their presumption, she has been tainted with it herself, and worships like Aaron, the brazen calf, when she knows what sort of a beast it is.

Here I met Roger Tart, who has read Horace, and cannot utter a sentence without shewing it; you may easily know

him, for he is wall eyed. I also found there your old friend and correspondent, Thundering Agonistes. He told me that the Forum would soon be opened in great splendour, and that they meant to discuss the Question, "Whether the Eastern or Western Hemisphere were most enlightened?" as the first exercise.

There are to be seen in this city, milliners' shops, in the windows of which "Circulating library" is printed in grotesque characters, with a brilliant circle of caps, bonnets, garters and corsets about it. Is not this, as appropriate an emblem of the state of literature among our brains and bellys, and, with reverence be it spoken, our young Lawyers, divines, and physicians, as Hermes himself, the father of symbols, could

have devised when at his wits' ends? What is it, but an eternity of flummery, revolving about — nothing!

If you will excuse the poverty of this scrawl, I will endeavour to write you a better account of my grievances hereafter.

NAT: ODD.